

Message Text

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ACTION SS-25

INFO OCT-01 ADP-00 SSO-00 CCO-00 NSCE-00 /026 W

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P 101225 Z MAR 73

FM AMEMBASSY VIENTIANE

TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 2965

USDEL FRANCE PRIORITY

WHITE HOUSE PRIORITY

C O N F I D E N T I A L VIENTIANE 1772

EXDIS

E. O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: (P) MOPS

(C) CASC, LA

SUBJECT: AMERICANS MISSING IN LAOS

U/ PW FOR SIEVERTS

REF: VIENTIANE 1526

1. AFTER REPEATED EFFORTS TO SEE LPF VIENTIANE REPRESENTATIVE SOTH PHETRASY, LATTER SENT LPF SOLDIER TO EMBASSY MORNING MARCH 10 TO SUGGEST MEETING AT LPF RESIDENCE WITH DCM DEAN AND POW OFFICER RAND SAME AFTERNOON 4 O' CLOCK. WE WERE ENCOURAGED BY SOTH SENDING LPF MESSENGER TO EMBASSY AND HOPED THAT HE WOULD HAVE AT THIS AFTERNOON' S MEETING REPLY FROM SAM NEAU REGARDING OUR PRESSING REQUEST FOR INFORMATION ON US/ PWS CAPTURED IN LAOS. UNFORTUNATELY THRUST OF HIS REMARKS WAS DIRECTED AT EXPLORING WAYS OF BREAKING PRESENT IMPASSE IN RLG- LPF NEGOTIATIONS RATHER THAN ANSWERING OUR DEMAND ON FATE OF US PRISONERS.

2. ON LIST OF US PRISONERS, SOTH MERELY SAID THAT LPF DELEGATION CHAIRMAN, PHOUNE SIPRASEUTH, WHO RETURNED VIENTIANE FROM SAM NEUA MARCH 8, HAD TOLD HIM THAT US DEMARCHES REQUESTING INFO ON PRISONERS HAD BEEN CONVEYED TO SOUPHANNOUVONG PERSONALLY. HOWEVER, SOTH HAD NO
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REPEAT NO REPLY YET TO TRANSMIT TO USEMBASSY. WHEN
PRESSED BY US, SOTH SAID THAT AS FAR AS HE KNEW, LPF
HOLD US PRISONERS. HOWEVER, INFORMATION ON NUMBERS HELD
AND PROCEDURE FOR REPATRIATION WOULD PROBABLY BE MADE
AVAILABLE AS RLG AND LPF EXPERTS ELABORATE A WRITTEN
PROTOCOL SPELLING OUT MODALITIES ON FOLLOWING 4 TOPICS:
(A) PROCEDURES FOR IMPLEMENTING CEASEFIRE; (B) WITH-
DRAWAL OF FOREIGN FORCES AND FOREIGN MILITARY PERSONNEL
FROM LAOS; (C) REPATRIATION OF PWS OF ALL NATIONALITIES;
(D) THE TWO CONTROL MECHANISMS -- JOINT RLG- LPF
COMMISSION AND THE ICC -- TO SUPERVISE THE IMPLEMENTA-
TION OF THE AGREEMENT. AS THIS PROTOCOL IS ELABORATED,
SOTH OPINED HE WOULD BE ABLE TO GIVE US INFORMATION
FROM SAM NEUA RE NUMBER OF US PWS HELD IN LAOS AND
WHERE, WHEN AND HOW THEY WIL BE RELEASED. ALSO IF
PHOUMI RETURNED TO VIENTIANE WITH PW INFO BEFORE MILITARY
PROTOCOL ELABORATED, SOTH THOUGHT HE WOULD HAVE AUTHORITY
TO MAKE IT AVAILABLE TO US.

3. WHEN WE POINTED OUT THAT WE UNDERSTAND CANADIAN
CITIZEN OPPEL MIGHT FLY FROM HANOI TO VIENTIANE WHERE
HE WOULD BE HANDED OVER TO CANDIAN AUTHORITIES, SOTH
SAID THAT OPPEL WAS MISSIONARY AND THAT THEREFORE THIS
WAS DIFFERENT FROM MILITARY PWS. WE PRESSED HIM ON
WHEN WE COULD EXPECT RELEASE OF US MISSIONARY MATTIX
BUT HE EVADED QUESTION. AT TIMES IT APPEARED TO US
THAT SOTH REALLY WAS NOT FULLY INFORMED ON LPF INTENTIONS
RE US PWS CAPTURED IN LAOS. HE DISCLAIMED ANY KNOWLEDGE
OF USG- DRV UNDERSTANDING THAT ALL US PWS CAPTURED IN
INDOCHINA -- INCLUDING THOSE IN LAOS -- WOULD BE
RELEASED THROUGH HANOI. HE MERELY REPEATED THAT LPF
DETAIN US PWS IN LAOS. WE GATHERED FROM WHAT SOTH
TOLD US THAT LPF HOLD US PRISONERS IN ADDITION TO THE 9
NAMES WHICH APPEARED ON THE FEBRUARY 1 LIST GIVEN
US BY NORTH VIETNAMESE.

4. MEETING WAS NOT AS PRODUCTIVE AS WE HAD HOPED.
SOTH WAS FRIENDLY THROUGHOUT BUT HAD NEXT TO NOTHING
TO TELL US ABOUT US PWS. ON THE OTHER HAND, HE WAS
VERY FORTHCOMING TALKING ABOUT THE IMPASSE IN THE RLG- LPF
NEGOTIATIONS WHICH IS REPORTED SEPTTEL.
GODLEY
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*** Current Classification *** CONFIDENTIAL

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